



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources © 2009



Wee-kly Recycling Ideas



Reducing, reusing and recycling are learned behaviors. The only way to make them a habit is to practice them daily at school, at work and in the home. It's sometimes the hardest to change a household routine – especially when adults are accustomed to doing things a certain way. As your Wee Recyclers learn to reduce, reuse and recycle at your facility, they can take these behaviors home and encourage their families to make them part of their daily routine, too.

Throughout the **Wee Recyclers Activity Guide** there are ways for you to encourage families to participate in recycling. The two Parent Letters that accompany the take-home copies of the recycling labels and the "Recycle – It's Easy" guide are a start. Not only do these communicate to the parents what their children are learning, but they also give them the tools with which to reinforce the behaviors that have been taught. In addition, some activities are reproducible and can be taken home for children to share with their families.

To help families adjust to the reducing/reusing/recycling routine, we hope you will share with them the Wee-kly Recycling Idea calendar. This calendar has 12 pages to correspond with the 12 months of the year. Each page is divided into four weekly suggestions; send home a page at the beginning of every month.

The ideas for reducing, reusing and recycling are practical, money-saving and earth-friendly.





January



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Here are some ideas for reducing, reusing and recycling that are practical, money-saving and earth-friendly. Help your child be a good Wee Recycler this month by following one of these suggestions each week. Learn with your child as you discover new ways of doing things.

Week One

Give your child a big box to play with. Play hide and seek or let your child pretend that the box is a spaceship, fort, car, time machine, etc. Let him draw on the box, cut out openings or tape on decorations. He is learning how to reuse something. After the box has been “worn out” ask him what should be done with the box. If you can recycle cardboard in your community, help him flatten the box (only if he agrees to do so), and take it to be recycled.

Week Two

Have a treasure hunt for reusables. Look around your kitchen for food containers (margarine tubs, yogurt cups, etc.) that can be reused for storage of left-over food, crayons or other items. After they are empty, help your child clean and save them for future use.

Week Three

My cup. Is your child always asking for a clean glass for a drink? Help her select an unbreakable cup or glass and draw a picture and her name on it with permanent markers. Keep this where she can reach it and encourage her to use it and rinse it out every time she has a drink. Wash the cup or glass at the end of each day. Avoid disposable cups whenever possible.

Week Four

Buy products in bulk or buy larger packages and put the amount you need for lunch or snacks in reusable containers. Buying in bulk is usually cheaper than buying individually wrapped servings and requires less packaging be thrown away. Let your child help pack his own servings in the smaller reusable containers and also help you clean and put away the containers when they are empty.



February



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Week One

Help your child learn her colors. Look for and save different colored plastic containers. Use these to store her treasures in. Help your child make a chart coding the colors to treasures. When she wants a particular item, help her use the chart to find it.

Week Two

Plan another treasure hunt. Look for single use or disposable items (napkins, towels, diapers, juices boxes, etc.) in your home. Make a list of these and a corresponding list of reusable alternatives. Ask your child to help you look for reusable items the next time you go shopping.

Week Three

My towel. Is your child always asking for paper towels to dry his hands? Help him select his own hand towel and hang it within his reach. Encourage him to use it whenever he has to dry his hands. Wash the towel regularly to keep it clean.

Week Four

Save old holiday and greeting cards and reuse them again. Have your child help you select and cut out portions of appropriate cards and make gift tags or “new” cards. Recycle the scraps that are left over.




March




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Week One

Help your child learn his numbers. Most plastic containers can be identified by a number stamped on the bottom of each container. Look for the recycling symbol  with the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 stamped inside of it. Collect all seven types and use these to help him learn to identify these numbers (by categorizing containers) and to count (by arranging in numerical order).

Week Two

Find out what is recyclable in your community and buy products that are packaged in materials that can be recycled. Or, look for and buy products that are packaged in materials that have already been recycled. Ask your child to help you look for the recyclable symbol  when you go shopping.

Week Three

Cut-out paper friends. Look for pictures of people and animals in old magazines. Help your child cut them out and glue them to a lightweight piece of cardboard. Glue a cardboard base or back brace to these and use them in play.

Week Four

Has your child outgrown some of her toys and clothes? Swap these with other families for “new ones.” Moms and dads can swap magazines and books too.



April



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Week One

Litter is everybody's problem and responsibility. Take your child for a walk along your street or block. Pick up litter as you walk along and dispose of it properly when you get home – perhaps even recycle some of it. Talk with your child about doing your part to help clean up the environment.

Week Two

Spring cleaning? Save some old clothes, shoes, hats and jewelry for playing “dress-up” with your child. Keep these in an old trunk, suitcase or cardboard box. Donate those items you don't want to charities.

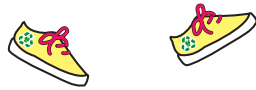
Week Three

Build a compost pile for vegetable scraps and yard waste (leaves & grass clippings). Compost vegetable and yard waste and use it to enrich your soil.

Your child can help you build the pile. Let her take the kitchen scraps out to the pile to be composted. Contact your local Department of Natural Resources or Cooperative Extension offices for information on composting.

Week Four

Help your child collect magazines at the end of each month and take them to a senior citizens' home to be reused. Talk with your child about sharing and reusing. In this instance you are sharing something that may otherwise be thrown away.



May



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Week One

Plastic people. Look for a plastic liquid soap bottle that has a narrow “waist.” Help your child make a person out of the bottle using markers to draw facial features and scraps of cloth glued in place for clothes.

Week Two

Make up your own “picnic basket” that includes reusable cups, plates, silverware and table cloth. Look for these items at garage sales. Let your child help you pack the picnic basket. Go on a picnic!

Week Three

Make your paper last twice as long. Encourage your child to use both sides of a piece of paper when drawing pictures or learning to write. Save paper that has only been written on one side in a “reuse” box for your child’s projects. Recycle paper when both sides have been used.

Week Four

Tire swing. Do you have an old tire lying around? Make a swing for your child using the tire and a strong piece of rope. After you hang it up, drill some drainage holes in the bottom of the tire.



June



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Week One

Assemble a variety of plastic containers to make sand box toys. Use your imagination to create scoops, strainers, measuring cups and small shovels, rakes or hoes. Draw the shape to be cut out with crayon or pencil. Submerge the plastic container in hot water to soften the plastic. Cut out the toy with scissors and smooth rough edges with sand paper.

Week Two

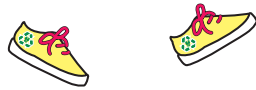
Encourage your child to use a dish cloth, rag or sponge for wiping up spills instead of paper toweling. They can be cleaned and used again instead of being used once and thrown away.

Week Three

Collect aluminum cans with your child and take them to a recycling center. Let your child keep the money and encourage him to save the money to buy something special. Aluminum is a very valuable metal and is easy to recycle. Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to keep a light bulb lit for 12 hours!

Week Four

Remember how to make a hat out of a piece of newspaper or an airplane out of a sheet of scrap paper? Share this knowledge with your child and have fun wearing hats and flying planes.



July



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Week One

Is your child curious about bugs, and you don't want to touch them? Make an insect viewing cage from a yogurt container with a clear top. Gently scoop the insect into the container and put on the lid. Let your child observe the insect for a while, and then let it go.

Week Two

Rainy day and nothing to do? Go on a treasure hunt and look for old crayons. Buy a crayon sharpener and put new points on all of the crayons. Store the crayons in a coffee can.

Week Three

Litter bag. Decorate a plastic or paper bag and put it in your car to prevent the temptation of throwing trash out the window or on the car floor. Let your child be responsible for emptying the bag after trips. Encourage her to recycle its contents if possible.

Week Four

Paper-mache. Create just about anything using paper-mache. Mix flour and water to the consistency of thin pancake batter. Dip strips of newspaper into this mixture and start creating. Create using layers of newspaper and allow time for drying between layers. This can be a fun, but messy, activity with your child.



August



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Week One

Cardboard tubes. Save your cardboard toilet paper tubes for making spy-glasses, binoculars, “tooters” and little people (draw on face, use twist ties for arms and color in clothes).

Week Two

Plastic or paper, which shopping bags are better for the environment? The best choice is a reusable bag. Make a reusable shopping bag with your child from scraps of heavy cloth. Put handles on it to make it easier to carry. Take it with you on shopping trips.

Week Three

Trash or treasures? Save scraps of paper, cardboard tubes, cloth, empty boxes, small containers, buttons, polystyrene trays, egg cartons, etc. and use these to create games and crafts on rainy days.

Week Four

Pretend to play “store” or “house.” Collect a variety of clean, empty food packages. Use large cardboard boxes for counters and shelves. Let children set-up their “wares” and make pretend money from scrap paper. You can visit their store and practice buying and selling.



September



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Week One

My bag. Help your child make a sack or bag out of a leg from an old pair of pants. Stitch one end shut and sew a draw-string into the open end. Your child can use this for holding small toys or personal treasures.

Week Two

Use a lunch box and be cool. Get your friends to use lunch boxes too. Pack your food in reusable containers instead of waxed paper, sandwich bags, or aluminum foil. It will stay fresher and will not get “squished!”

Week Three

Household hazards. Look for the words **Warning, Danger, Hazardous, Poison and Use Caution** on household chemicals and cleaning compounds. Store these out of your child’s reach. For older children, point out these warning words and tell them these things will hurt them. Buy vinegar and baking soda instead of strong cleaning compounds. They work nearly as well and are less toxic.

Week Four

Big, Bigger, Biggest. Cut paper toweling tubes into different lengths. Practice putting them in order from smallest to biggest. Use these to explain the terms big, bigger, biggest or small, smaller, smallest.



October



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Week One

Cut a variety of shapes from polystyrene meat packing trays. Have your child use these to practice identifying and tracing shapes.

Week Two

Save your old clothes for a garage sale or give them to a charity. If they are ripped or torn and cannot be repaired, then use them for cleaning rags. Let your child help you cut off and save the buttons.

Week Three

Save your leaves. Let your child help you rake the leaves in the fall. Put some of the leaves around the plants in your yard to protect them from the cold. Mix some leaves with the soil in your garden to make it richer. While you are working together, look for brightly colored and different shaped leaves.

Week Four

Getting dressed. Save zippers, buckles, snaps, shoe laces, buttons and buttonholes from old clothes and shoes. Sew these to a heavy piece of cloth in such a way that they can be manipulated by your child. Hang the cloth on a wall or over a chair and encourage your child to practice zipping, buckling, snapping, tying and buttoning.



November



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Week One

Make a bird feeder with your child using a two-liter soda bottle. (Ask for the directions from your day care provider.) Hang it near a window and fill it with bird seed. Enjoy feeding and watching birds together all year.

Week Two

Make puzzles. Look through old magazines with your child and select interesting pictures. Glue these to light-weight cardboard and cut into puzzle pieces. Start with simple shapes and large pieces. Store each puzzle in a used cereal box.

Week Three

Inexpensive gift-wrap. Instead of buying new wrapping paper, wrap gifts for children in the funny pages from the Sunday paper. Use a brightly colored piece of yarn for a "ribbon."

Week Four

Holiday chains. Help your child make chains for decorating trees, windows and walls out of small strips of colorful scrap paper that are glued together and linked to each other.



December



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Week One

Snowflakes. Help your child decorate your windows using snowflakes made from scraps of paper. Select various sizes of used paper and fold each one into halves and then into thirds. Cut patterns and designs in the folded sections. Unfold and tape the snowflakes to your windows.

Week Two

Practice sequencing. Read the Sunday comics with your child and select a favorite comic strip or story. Cut this out and glue it to a piece of lightweight cardboard. Cut out each picture, turn it over and number it in order. Shuffle the pictures and let your child reassemble them and tell you the story.

Week Three

Holiday stocking stuffers. If your child has or is expected to receive battery operated toys this season, buy a small battery recharger and give her rechargeable batteries as a present. Rechargeable batteries cost more initially, but they can be reused many times. They will be cheaper than always buying new batteries and are better for the environment.

Week Four

Holiday treat for the birds. Don't throw your tree away after the holidays; extend its life by placing it outside for the birds. Decorate the tree with strings of popcorn, cranberries and raisins. Hang pine cones covered with peanut butter and rolled in bird seed or chunks of suet on the tree. Watch for and identify the birds that come to eat and find shelter in your old tree.